

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**White River Public School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-2006**

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Dates of On Site Visit: February 7 and 8, 2006

Date of Report: February 24, 2006

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- News releases, Channel 17 print out

- Comprehensive plan
- Screening documentation
- General district information for White River School District 47-1
- Child Count information
- Parent lists
- Student file reviews
- Personnel information
- Student enrollment information
- Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) meeting data
- Student referral data
- Parent, teacher, and administrator surveys
- Budget information
- SAT 9 participation rates
- Exit data
- Comprehensive needs assessment
- Suspension and expulsion data
- District policy manual

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported an ongoing child find system, referrals are documented in student files, there are no out of district placements, the district is making progress toward performance goals and indicators, and there has been no suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities. Staff development is provided based on the expressed needs of teachers. A needs assessment is completed annually.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through staff interviews, the monitoring team identified the utilization of Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) as a promising practice. The TAT meets regularly to review student social and academic concerns. Membership is made up of a core team and appropriate related personnel to address the student's needs. Another promising practice the monitoring team identified was the district's Reading First program. District staff reported positive reading improvements by students, since starting the program.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for Principle One: General Supervision, as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan

- Child find documentation
- School district budget
- District records enrollment information—SIMS
- General District Information for White River School District 47-1
- Three Rivers Cooperative training
- Testing documentation
- Student referrals
- Student file reviews
- Surveys
- Personnel information

Meets requirements

Extended School Year (ESY) is determined by May 1st for all students who have shown regression during long holidays/vacations, and meetings are held with parents to gain permission for ESY services. Based on state data tables, the district provides a free appropriate public education for all children. The steering committee reports no suspension and expulsions.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for Principle Two: Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), as concluded by the steering committee, with the exception of Services to Children ages 3-21.

Out of compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:13:02 Free appropriate public education (FAPE)

FAPE includes special education and related which meet the following requirements: 1. Are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; 2. Meet the standards of the state board in this article and the implementing regulations for Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; 3. Include preschool, kindergarten, elementary school and secondary school education in South Dakota; and 4. Are provided in conformity with an individual educational program and the article.

Through a student file review, the monitoring team determined there is a student on child count who is not being provided special education services in accordance with state requirements. The student's annual IEP review date was 12-15-05. Documentation indicates no meeting was held until 1-26-06, at which time only the special education teacher and principal signed the IEP; however, the IEP was not completed (i.e. special education service to be provide and placement). Through the file review and staff interview, it was determined that special education services are not being provided.

The district must reconvene the student's IEP committee and complete documentation to provide FAPE to the student.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan
- General curriculum information
- Surveys
- Needs assessment information
- Student file reviews
- Personnel information
- General District Information for White River School District 47-1

Meets requirements:

The steering committee reported that White River School District receives permission prior to all assessments, and that testing is given in a language that is native to the child. The district does not have any Limited English Proficient students in the district. The district does have grandparents who are more comfortable with having things explained in Lakota and it is providing that service to those people through native speakers in the community when necessary.

The steering committee ensures proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. The steering committee also reported that all students received a multi-disciplinary assessment prior to any services being rendered. The school district ensures reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

Needs improvement

The steering committee reported parental input into the evaluation process needs improvement. Parent surveys are sent to every parent for meetings and evaluations. Many are not returned to the school. In addition, timelines for completion of evaluation need to improve.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Three: Appropriate Evaluation meets the requirements, with the exception of determination of needed evaluation data, timelines, evaluation procedures, and eligibility criteria. See information under: Needs Improvement and Out of Compliance

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees the district needs to improve parental input into the evaluation process. Parental input into the evaluation process was found in files which have been recently evaluated. The district needs to continue making improvement in this area. In addition, the monitoring team agrees with the steering committee on the need to improve timelines, particularly annual reviews.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04:02. Determination of needed evaluation data

As part of an evaluation, the individual education program team and other individuals with knowledge and skills necessary to interpret evaluation data, determine whether the child has a disability, and determine whether the child needs special education and related services, as appropriate, shall: review existing evaluation data on the child, including evaluations and information provided by the parents of the child; current classroom-based assessments and observations; and observations by teachers and related services providers.

No documentation was found in two student file reviews to support that determination of needed evaluation data occurred prior to the students being dismissed from special education service this past year.

Issue requiring immediate attention

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

ARSD 24:05:24.01:05 Diagnostic procedures for autism

Students suspected of autism must be evaluated in all areas related to the suspected disability. The evaluation shall utilize multiple sources of data, including information from parents and other caretakers, direct observation, performance on standardized tests of language/communication and cognitive functioning and other tests of skill and performance, including specialized instruments specifically developed for the evaluation of students with autism.

A student file review completed by the monitoring team indicated that reevaluations were completed in 2002 and spring 2005. The disabling condition reported on the child count was not substantiated by documentation within the file. The student's evaluation information from 2002 did not support meeting the criteria for autism, nor does it in 2005. Information to support specialized instruments developed for evaluation of students with autism was not found in the file.

The district must reconvene this student's IEP committee and determine what autism evaluation is needed to determine eligibility for special education or special education and related services.

<p>Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards</p>

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- General District Information for White River School District 47-1
- Student file reviews
- Parent rights
- Comprehensive plan
- In-service training records
- Student file access documents

Meets requirements

The steering committee reported parental rights are provided annually to parents of students with disabilities, graduation requirements are documented, and parents are fully informed in native language if it is something other than English. The school district's comprehensive plan outlines procedures to ensure the rights of children if no parent is identified and a list of surrogate parents is available.

The district provides the parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education. The district's comprehensive plan has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint actions and requests for due process that ensure compliance.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Four: Procedural Safeguards meets requirements.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- General District Information for White River School District 47-1
- Comprehensive plan
- Student file reviews
- Personnel information
- Surveys
- Student progress data
- Personnel training records
- Budget information

Meets requirements

The district ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings and includes all required content. Through file reviews, the steering committee reported appropriate team membership and progress reports as meeting requirements.

Needs improvement

The steering committee indicated all areas of transition need improvement. As a result, changing the evaluation instrument from Brigance to Enderle Severson transition has improved since the beginning of school year 2005-2006.

Out of compliance

Areas the steering committee found out of compliance are present levels of performance, the affect of the disability on the student involvement in the general education curriculum, annual goals and short-term objectives, documentation of frequency, duration and location of modifications, and documentation of specific special education services.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Five: Individualized Education Program meets requirements, except in the areas of present level of performance and transition. See information under: Out of Compliance.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team was unable to validate the areas of annual goals and short-term objectives, documentation of frequency, duration and location of modifications, and documentation of specific special education services as out of compliance. Only minimal concerns were noted in these areas.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP)

Present level of performance

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process.

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee's findings in the area of present levels of performance (PLOP). Student files lacked the required content (i.e. specific skill area(s) affected by the student's disability, to include strengths and needs, along with how the disability affects the student's involvement in the general curriculum and parent input). File reviews indicated a need to improve functional assessments to acquire the skill-based information to develop present levels of performance for students eligible for special education services.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03(1) Content of individualized education program (IEP) and

ARSD 24:05:27:13.02 Transition Services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability, designed within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the student with a disability to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's strengths, preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

The district has made some improvement in transition services file reviews and interviews with staff indicate it is out of compliance. The review team concluded transition assessments are completed; however, the information was not documented in student's present level of performance (PLOP). The present levels of performance for the five transition areas (employment, independent living, community participation, adult services and post secondary) should be based upon the functional assessment information. The present levels of performance lacked the student's strengths, weakness/needs regarding school to secondary activities.

Transition services and activities need to be utilized as a planning device to help ensure the students achieved their desired outcomes for employment and independent living. Although file reviews indicate improvement in developing a written plan on how the students would meet their postsecondary outcomes, the district needs to improve the coordination of the activities with the assessments, which are completed for transition. The students' IEPs did not have a coordinated set of activities, which addressed the individual student needs.

In addition, documentation indicates one out of five students transition age have attended their IEP meeting since May 2005. Through interview with staff, it was determined that no plan of action is in place to improve student attendance at their IEP meetings.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.02 Development, review and revision of the IEP- Consideration of Special Factors

In developing, reviewing, and revising each student's IEP, the team shall consider the strengths of the students and the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their student, the results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the students as appropriate, and the results of the student's performance on any general state or district-wide assessment program. The individualized education

program team also shall: In the case of a student whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, consider, if appropriate, strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports, to address that behavior.

In several student files reviewed, behavioral assessment and/or present levels of performance contained information regarding the impact of student behavior on educational performance. However, in developing the IEPs for these students, the team checked “no,” that the behavior does not impede learning and did not address strategies, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, to address the behaviors.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- File reviews
- Comprehensive plan
- IEP

Meets requirements

Based on file reviews and surveys, all children receive services in the least restrictive environment with the supports they need for their successful participation.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Although the steering committee did not identify the district’s preschool as a promising practice, the monitoring team noted it through interviews and a tour of the school. The preschool program is open to all children ages three through five. Three-year-old children are more apt to only participate two days per week, as the older children choose the four-day per week schedule. There is one certified early childhood/special education teacher and paraprofessional in the classroom. Children may participate in breakfast and lunch while at school. District staff reported the program to be an effective tool in providing appropriate developmental opportunities, as well as a tool for remediating potential areas of concern and early identification of students with special needs.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Six: Least Restrictive Environment.